

LTG Flowers Remarks  
USACE Environmental Conference  
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**Introduction**

Welcome to the US Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Development Workshop. I'd particularly like to welcome Cong. Earl Blumenauer, from the Third Oregon Congressional District. I'm glad you could be here with us today and I look forward to your remarks. I'd also like to welcome the various private sector and non-profit organizations who have joined us. We are very happy that all of you could be here. I'm particularly encouraged by the diversity of Corps' participation. All the members of the Corps' environmental team are here today. HTRW, Water Resources, Operations, Regulatory, Health & Safety - You're here to network and learn from each other. One of the most important aspects of this event will be the listening sessions. My staff must be paying attention to me. The listening sessions bring to life a key concept I've brought to the Corps, Synergy.

You will hear that word many times in this presentation and I expect all of my staff to be able to present it as I do. "Synergy is the fruit of thinking win-win and seeking first to understand ... It's not compromise ... It's the creation of third alternatives that are genuinely better than solutions individuals could ever come up with on their own." Synergy will be incorporated into everything this organization does. It may have its greatest value in our environmental missions.

**Context**

We have serious work to do over the next few days. Our nation faces compelling water resources and environmental challenges that will affect our prosperity and quality of life. Ecosystem & watershed management, smart growth, risk and uncertainty in hazardous waste cleanups - these are just a few of the problems we face. We deal with these issues in an increasingly polarized environment. Often, we find ourselves at the center of the storm. Finding solutions that meet all agendas is difficult at best, and at times simply not possible.

In this region we face difficult questions associated with multiple competing interests. These issues impact upon major projects such as the Columbia River deepening and the hydropower network. The only way that we can deal with these issues is to consider the perspectives of all stakeholders, apply the best science & technology, and strive to achieve a synergy between environmental and economic interests. At our best, we will seek to accomplish outcomes that future generations will judge as having been within their best interests. We must think in terms of our legacy and not just efficiency to meet today's needs.

When I look ahead, I see a national and international need for the unique talents of the Corps. Key aspects of our national infrastructure are deteriorating. The American Society of Civil Engineers released their infrastructure report card last month.

Waterways got a D+, and hazardous waste didn't score any better. National budget priorities may not provide substantial new funding for environmental restoration. But when the nation decides that it's time to go to work, I promise you that they will turn to us. We have served this nation for over 225 years. We've never let this country down and we won't do it now. In its hour of need we all have to step forward.

### **Transition**

Now I'd like to focus on some of our environmental initiatives but I'm going to share a bit of history with you first. In 1888, long before the construction of the Bonneville Dam, the Commander of the Corps Portland District filed a report on the depletion of the Columbia River fisheries. Gazing at the maze of nets, traps, and fish wheels that clogged the Columbia near Astoria, he concluded that it was a miracle that any large fish escaped to go up the river. He was Major William A. Jones, and he proposed mitigation measures that were not adopted until well into the next century. Some problems just don't go away - but we in the Corps are going to work hard to provide the best science and world class engineering to address the issues of our time.

### **Operations**

One of the most important aspects of the Corps environmental mission is found in the operation of our many projects. The Corps is responsible for stewardship of nearly 12 million acres of public land and water. We are participating in the recovery of at least 73 federally listed endangered, or threatened species, through responsible stewardship and management of our lands and waters. Your work is helping to do that.

One of our greatest challenges is that funding for our operations program has lagged far behind requirements for many years. We are the leading provider of water based recreation, but many of our facilities need modernization. I will hold a quarterly operations review with all of our commanders and senior leaders. At our first meeting in February, I asked for development of a national strategy that will address O&M requirements over a 5-10 year period. The strategy will incorporate a national theme, and will also be relevant to local and regional concerns. Many of our operations staff are represented here today. I want you to carry the message that the senior leadership has "got it," but I also need your support and your best ideas. Be proactive and use your "do it" card whenever you can make a difference.

### **USACE Environmental Operating Principles**

There are two new initiatives that I am announcing here today for the first time. I want to start a dialogue on development of key principles emphasizing our environmental awareness. My intent is to develop doctrine that will encompass all USACE environmental operations, both civil works and military programs. Doctrine dictates how you do things. This is something we don't have now.

Today I'll put a mark on the wall and in 60 days I'd like my staff to come back to me with a set of recommendations for a final product. I'm interested in getting comments from all of USACE, and that includes everybody here today. Let's have input submitted through the chain of command. My commander's can provide their own

recommendations, but I'd also like individual comments passed along to headquarters.

If you are outside the organization and you have an interest in the issue, send your input through your regional district or division commander. If that won't work, send it directly to me. This speech will be posted on my web site so don't worry about trying to catch all of the details.

Here it is....

**Environmental Sustainability** - All Corps work will be based upon the need for people and nature to co-exist in a healthy, supportive, diverse, and sustainable condition.

**Recognize interdependence of activities** - We will recognize interdependence with nature. We will consider the possibility of second and third order effects of our projects.

**Be responsible for cumulative impacts** - The Corps will accept responsibility for the consequences of planning, design, and construction decisions upon the continued viability of natural systems and human life.

**Be committed to long-term public safety** - The Corps will create only safe, engineered objects of long-term value.

**Support a systems approach** - In all aspects of our design and construction, the Corps will evaluate and optimize the life cycle of products and processes so that, as much as possible, we approach the state of natural systems, in which there is no waste.

**Understand and utilize the dynamic nature of the environment** - Our projects will rely to the fullest extent possible on renewable energy sources and recyclable products.

And finally...**Seek continuous improvements** - As public servants, we will seek constant improvements by sharing, promoting, collaborating, and integrating knowledge.

### **USACE Environmental Strategy**

So if you're a senior leader don't relax just yet - I've got another topic for you. I want to set a corporate strategy for environmental issues. It will be applicable to both civil works and military programs, and will serve as a guidepost for our environmental research. We will be working very hard on this over the next month or so. I'd like to have this developed by my senior leaders at the headquarters and then staffed to the field. Because we have not had a unified environmental strategy, I believe that we may have missed opportunities that we could have capitalized on. Now we will apply synergy at all levels of the Corps and develop a global strategy for the environment. I expect multiple benefits from these two efforts.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

You've heard me talk about environmental sustainability today. It's not a new concept and reflects an achievement of both economic and environmental goals. Environmental

sustainability incorporates many of the ideas that are already part of Corps planning procedures. This is important to us now for a variety of reasons. I believe that an emphasis on environmental sustainability will produce greater balance, collaboration and transparency in our programs.

How will this be done on a practical basis? For example, in our water resources work we will search for environmentally sustainable alternatives. Thoughtful development does not damage the environment. The Jennings Randolph Reservoir in the Baltimore District is an excellent example of a project where environmental benefit was built into the original project. The construction of selective withdrawal structures, where water quality parameters are monitored at various elevations, enables the reservoir manager to release high-quality water for aquatic habitat. We now have a blue-ribbon trout fishery in an area that was adversely affected by acid mine drainage. This project is a testimonial to the ecosystem benefits which can be gained by the appropriate use of technology. There's no other organization like the Corps that can get something like this done. You are the cream of the crop!

### **System Approaches**

Integrated Water Resources Management is one of the recurring themes that we heard in our nationwide series of listening sessions. It will become a part of our environmental doctrine. Our stakeholders want to see a more holistic approach to planning and management. That's what we heard, and that's what we're going to do. Issues such as land use, environmental management, and water resources management are all linked at the regional level.

We recently published a campaign plan to support our strategic vision. One of our goals is to "increase opportunities to create synergy between economic objectives and environmental values." This will be pursued at all levels of the Corps. Systems planning is one of the tools we will use to accomplish this objective.

### **Hazardous Waste Cleanup**

Turning now to our environmental remediation work - The Corps executes over a billion dollars every year in hazardous waste cleanups. This work ranges from Base Realignment and Closure cleanups and Formerly Used Defense Sites, work performed on active military installations, to projects performed for the Environmental Protection Agency under the Superfund Program.

This work is never easy. The sites represent complex scientific and engineering challenges. There is always a significant amount of federal, state, and local regulatory involvement, and public interest groups are rightly concerned with the work we do.

The Corps already has a great reputation for our work in this area but we must seek continuous improvement. Our keys to success will be implementation of new technology and synergy. Advances in areas such as rapid site characterization have saved millions of dollars and accelerated cleanups at many sites.

Innovation in hazardous waste cleanups is not always an easy thing to do. Concepts such as risk analysis are not always understood by citizens who just want to get rid of a problem, no matter how much it costs. This is where synergy becomes vitally important. By using active listening to communicate with our stakeholders early and often, we will seek to build consensus, to demonstrate our commitment to long term safety, and to develop solutions that incorporate the best technology

### **Installation Support for the Future**

Our work in hazardous waste remediation is over 20 years old. We have served the Army and the nation in this area and we will continue to do so in the future. We will also position ourselves to support the future environmental management needs of our installations. Environmental compliance, pollution prevention, and conservation are the three pillars of installation environmental management. We will be responsive to our Army's Public Works Directorates and provide them the services they need.

### **Conclusion**

And so in conclusion - Service to the Army and the nation through "effective environmental stewardship" is one of the key goals of my command. I say this using the broadest sense of the term encompassing restoration and remediation, in addition to water and land management. What does this mean to you, the Corps' staff who are responsible for our environmental projects? It means that you need to work for the needs of people and those of nature, and manage lands, waters and projects designed to provide for the needs of future generations. This is our path to the future. We will pursue it with diligence and integrity, in service to the national interest. I need your dedication and leadership. It is critical to our ability to achieve success. You have an opportunity to make a difference and I need you with me.

You've heard me talk the talk, now walk with me as I walk the walk...